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FACT SHEET

DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY SCORECARD GIVES SAN DIEGO HIGHEST RATING FOR ITS DISASTER COMMUNICATIONS PLAN

San Diego Region's Interoperable Communications Ranked Among Top Four of 75 Major Urban Areas in the Nation

Mayor Jerry Sanders today announced that the Department of Homeland Security has rated the San Diego region as one of the top four major urban areas out of 75 reviewed nationwide with regard to its ability to communicate between jurisdictions during a disaster. Rated highest along with San Diego are Washington, D.C.; Minneapolis-St. Paul; and Columbus, Ohio. Two other smaller urban areas—Sioux Falls, South Dakota, and Laramie County, Wyoming—were also given the top rating.

In May 2006, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) announced that by the end of the year, each of 75 urban areas in the country would be getting a "scorecard" identifying their ability to communicate during a disaster. DHS announced that the purpose of the scorecard is to identify gaps and help determine improvements needed to various regions' communications interoperability strategies. Interoperability refers to a region's ability to communicate across various boundaries, jurisdictions and government agencies.

SAN DIEGO RATES HIGHEST "ADVANCED IMPLEMENTATION SCORES" IN ALL AREAS
The scorecard measure communications in three areas:

- **Governance**
- **Usage**
- **Standard Operating Procedures**

- Four grades were possible on the scorecard – early implementation, intermediate implementation, established implementation and advanced implementation.
- San Diego received advanced marks in all three areas measured.

San Diego, CA

Tactical Interoperable Communications Scorecard

Summary

Governance: *Advanced Implementation*

Standard Operating Procedures: *Advanced Implementation*

Usage: *Advanced Implementation*

The San Diego Urban Area (UA) includes the City of San Diego and counties of San Diego and Imperial.

Governance: *Advanced Implementation*

The Tactical Interoperable Communications Plan (TICP) Peer Review stated that "[t]his was one of the most thorough, well planned TICPs reviewed and reflects an earnest effort by many of the people who have a vested interest and can be viewed as a model." The San Diego UA established strategic communications interoperability planning as a priority over a decade ago. This long-term success and collaboration in the UA points to significant support from executive leadership in the UA. While the TICP seems well-established, organizing all agreements (e.g., memoranda of understanding [MOU]) in an accessible format would support continued coordination among participating agencies. The established partnership between San Diego law enforcement and the Department of Justice (DoJ) Integrated Wireless Network (IWN) is commendable, and should be considered a best practice. The San Diego UA should continue to reach out to organizations (e.g., utilities) not specifically involved in the decision-making group. The San Diego UA has budget plans for system upgrades, as well as operations and maintenance, but it is unclear how many years out funding is allocated.

Recommendations:

- Recommend working toward the establishment of a regional MOU for interoperability (if a regional MOU is not already in place), and reference all applicable agreements in the TICP and store them in an accessible format
- Identify long-term (e.g., 3 to 5 years) communications interoperability funding sources

Standard Operating Procedures (SOP): *Advanced Implementation*

San Diego officials indicated that 90 percent of the TICP was based on previous policies, and these SOPs are well documented in their TICP. Exercise evaluators observed responder operation of communications systems, which demonstrated the effective use of policies, practices, and procedures. Evaluators also noted that these SOPs "within the San Diego UA are effective in providing for tactical interoperable communications among local responders" during real-world incidents. Additional steps, such as disseminating, formalizing, and training on these tactical policies, would support the widespread and consistent use of the SOPs . The National Incident Management System (NIMS)/ Incident Command System (ICS) has been implemented for more than 1 year, and the certified Communications Unit Leader showed proficiency during the TICP validation exercise.

Recommendations:

- Continue to conduct training so that SOPs remain entrenched in operations

- Continue basic and advanced training and exercises on SOPs (include communications unit implementation consistent with the TICP) to ensure that all participating first responder agencies attain and maintain NIMS/ICS compliance

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Usage: *Advanced Implementation* ●

The San Diego UA uses its shared system on a daily basis for multi-agency, multidiscipline responses. Use of this shared system provides a means of interoperability to most users in the UA. Repeated multijurisdictional responses to wild land fires have led to ongoing improvements in the usage of interoperable communications equipment. The UA showed proficiency in the use of radio caches and the shared system to provide seamless communications during the TICP validation exercise. In addition, exercise participants were able to demonstrate familiarity and effective use of gateways and shared channels. The San Diego UA has established a partnership with the University of California, San Diego to prototype a regionwide, public safety wireless data network - High Performance Wireless Research and Education, which is commendable and should be considered a best practice.

Recommendation:

- Consider adding communications interoperability as a component of all future exercises

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Below is a summary of the area's existing technology used to provide communications interoperability:

Technology Overview

The San Diego UA's Regional Communications System is a large 800 megahertz (MHz), trunked system that spans two counties. It supports the majority of the area's users. The City of San Diego also operates an 800 MHz, trunked system. Both of these systems support shared talk groups for mutual aid with large contingents of federal users operating in the very high frequency band. There are also mobile gateways and console patches available for interoperability among federal and local first responders.

Both the city and county of San Diego are upgrading their respective proprietary, trunked systems to the same version for improved interoperability. Both jurisdictions are interested in future migration to the Project 25 standard, but the costs to do so have been prohibitive thus far. The area is also working toward installing a wide-area digital, microwave backbone to provide a dedicated, high-speed link for data sharing and collaboration. Public safety administrators, elected officials, and the San Diego Association of Governments, in collaboration with San Diego State University, have been actively working to develop a regional technology framework. The expected governance agreement will effectively establish a Regional Authority whose goals will include developing long-term priorities for the funding of technology projects and a "Clearinghouse" process for the review of technology grant requests to ensure that the requests are in the best long-term interests of regional public safety and that they are coordinated to avoid duplicate grant requests.

Tactical Interoperable Communications Scorecard
Definitions of Maturity Levels

Elements	*Early Implementation*	*Intermediate Implementation*	*Established Implementation*	*Advanced Implementation*
Standard Operating Procedures (SOP)	Region-wide SOPs were developed and formalized for the first time through the TICP, but have not been disseminated to all included agencies. Some elements of NIMS/ICS procedures for command and control are in place, but understanding varies among agencies and was an area of difficulty during exercise(s).	Some existing SOPs were incorporated in the TICP and steps have been taken to institute these interoperability procedures among included agencies. Formal NIMS/ICS procedures are in place, but understanding varies among agencies leading to some issues during the exercise(s).	Existing regional SOPs were reviewed and included in the TICP, and are in use by included agencies. NIMS-compliant command and control has been instituted by all agencies and disciplines in the region. Despite minor issues, all SOPs were successfully demonstrated during exercise(s).	Regional SOPs, reviewed through the TICP process, are in place and regularly used by included agencies. NIMS procedures are well established among all agencies and disciplines. All procedures were effectively utilized during exercise(s).
Usage	Interoperable communications solutions are rarely used for multi-agency communication and difficulties were encountered in achieving interoperability during exercise(s).	First responders use interoperability solutions regularly and demonstrated the ability to achieve multi-agency communications despite some challenges during exercise(s).	First responders use interoperability solutions regularly and easily. The region demonstrated successful multi-agency (which may have included state, federal, and support organizations) communications during exercise(s).	First responders regularly and seamlessly utilize interoperability solutions. The region demonstrated successful multi-agency communications during exercise(s), including state, federal and support organizations.
Governance	Decision making groups are informal, and do not yet have a strategic plan in place to guide collective communications interoperability goals and funding.	Some *formal* agreements exist and *informal* agreements are in practice among members of a decision making group; regional strategic and budget planning processes are beginning to be put in place.	Formal agreements outline the roles and responsibilities of a decision making group, which has an agreed upon strategic plan that addresses sustainable funding for collective, regional interoperable communications needs.	Decision making bodies proactively look to expand membership to ensure representation from broader public support disciplines and other levels of government, while updating their agreements and strategic plan on a regular basis.